

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-16 (canceled).

Claim 17 (new): A microorganism culturing apparatus comprising:
a microorganism;
a culturing solution for culturing the microorganism;
a container arranged to hold the culturing solution; and
a support arranged to support and hold the container; wherein
the container takes on and maintains a predetermined shape by being
supported by the support.

Claim 18 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the support includes a bottom member defining a bottom surface and side plates defining side surfaces, the side plates and the container having transparent portions, respectively, and the transparent portions of the side plates and the transparent portions of the container overlap each other.

Claim 19 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 18, wherein the side plates are made of flat plates and at least one set of paired flat plates oppose each other.

Claim 20 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the support includes side plates defining side surfaces and a framework arranged to support the side plates, and end portions of the side plates have attachment portions that are arranged to engage with the framework and that are removably fixed to the framework.

Claim 21 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 20, further comprising posts disposed upright with both ends thereof fixed to the framework, and pressing members that are disposed outside of and substantially parallel to the posts, wherein the side plates are squeezed between the pressing members and the posts, and the pressing members are fixed to the posts.

Claim 22 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 21, wherein the side plates are flat plates disposed end to end in a longitudinal direction of the framework, the flat plates are interconnected through the posts end to end in the longitudinal direction of the framework, with two adjacent ends of the flat plates fixed to one post with one pressing member.

Claim 23 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, further comprising a gas introduction tube arranged to introduce gas into the culturing solution, the gas introduction tube is provided in the container.

Claim 24 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 20, wherein the side plates are supported for rotation about bottom ends in a state of fixation between the attachment portions and the framework being released.

Claim 25 (new):. The culturing apparatus of Claim 24, further comprising wires, wherein the ends of the side plates on the upper portion side of the framework are connected through the wires to the upper portions of the framework.

Claim 26 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 24, further comprising a stopper that is provided at a bottom portion of the framework to restrict the rotation range of the side plates.

Claim 27 (new): The microorganism culturing apparatus of Claim 20, wherein the framework and the sides plates are movable relative to each other in a state of the

fixation between the attachment portions and the framework being released, and the relative motion produces a clearance between the upper portion of the framework and the ends of the side plates on the upper portion side of the framework.

Claim 28 (new): A microorganism culturing apparatus for culturing microorganism in a culturing solution, comprising:

side plates defining side surfaces of the culturing apparatus and arranged to define a culturing space; and

a bottom portion defining a bottom of the culturing apparatus to accommodate the culturing solution; wherein

the bottom portion has a convex shape directed vertically down toward a center of the width of the culturing apparatus, and a gas introduction tube arranged to introduce a gas into the culturing solution is disposed above the bottom portion at a lower end of the convex-shape of the bottom portion.

Claim 29 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the gas introduction tube is provided with holes along an entire cross-section of a substantially circular circumference thereof.

Claim 30 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the container includes therein a gas introduction tube having minute holes along an entire cross-section of a substantially circular circumference thereof and a gas supply tube arranged to supply gas to the gas introduction tube, and the container further includes an opening at only one position for putting in the microorganism and the culturing solution, with one end of the gas supply tube connected to the gas introduction tube and with the other end of the gas supply tube extending out through the opening.

Claim 31 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the container is a substantially rectangular bag having longer sides and shorter sides, the opening is provided at one end portion of the shorter side of the substantially rectangular bag, the

gas introduction tube is disposed at the other end portion of the shorter side of the substantially rectangular bag along the longer side of the substantially rectangular bag, and shaft passage members arranged to allow a shaft to pass through are provided along the longer side on the side on which the opening is provided.

Claim 32 (new): A method of culturing a microorganism comprising the steps of:
providing a microorganism;
providing a culturing solution for culturing the microorganism;
providing a container arranged to hold the culturing solution; and
providing a support arranged to support and hold the container; and
providing the container on the support such that the container takes on and maintains a predetermined shape by being supported by the support.

Claim 33 (new): The method according to Claim 32, further comprising the step of putting the microorganism and the culturing solution in the container before or after the step of providing the container on the support.

Claim 34 (new): The method according to Claim 32, wherein the container is a substantially rectangular bag having longer sides and shorter sides, an opening is provided at one end portion of the shorter side of the substantially rectangular bag, a gas introduction tube is disposed at the other end portion of the shorter side of the substantially rectangular bag along the longer side of the substantially rectangular bag, and shaft passage members arranged to allow a shaft to pass through are provided along the longer side on the side on which the opening is provided.

Claim 35 (new): The method according to Claim 34, further comprising the step of passing a shaft longer than the longer side through the shaft passage members of the bag, and turning the shaft to roll up the bag around the shaft with the gas introduction tube disposed in the lower portion of the bag substantially parallel to the

shaft so that the portion of the bag that the gas introduction tube is disposed in is located on an outermost side and both ends of the shaft are exposed outside of the bag.

Claim 36 (new): The method according to Claim 35, wherein the support includes side plates defining side surfaces and a framework arranged to support the side plates, and end portions of the side plates have attachment portions that are arranged to engage with the framework and that are removably fixed to the framework, the method further comprising the steps of placing a roll body including the shaft and the bag above the framework, and rolling out the bag from the shaft to insert the bag into the framework.